COGNITION

Concepts

Mental category we form to group objects, events, or situations that share common characteristics or features. Defined by Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin (1967) as "the search for and listing of attributes that can be used to distinguish exemplars from non exemplars of various categories". Objects, events, or people sharing common characteristics and properties are categorized and classified as one. This categorization is known as “concepts’. Different categories are different concepts e.g. the concept of different objects, people, or events

Rules of concept formation

Psychologists have often studied how people learn concepts defined by logical rules requiring two dimensions, such as color and shape. Following are **four fundamental logic rules**:

Conjunctive concept: It refers to a class of objects having more than one feature in common. Sometimes called "and" concepts: To belong to the concept class, an item must have "This feature and this feature and this feature." For example, a motorcycle must have two wheels and an engine and handle bars.

Relational concepts: They classify objects on the basis of their relationship to something else or by the relationship between features of an object. Larger, above, left, north, and upside down are all relational concepts. Another example is sister, which is defined as "a female considered in her relation to another person having the same parents."

Disjunctive concepts: These refer to objects that have at least one of several possible features. These are "either-or concepts." To belong, an item must have "this feature or that feature or another feature." In the game of baseball, a strike is either a swing and a miss or a pitch down the middle or a foul ball. The either-or quality of disjunctive concepts makes them difficult to learn.

Prototypes: In addition to rules and features, most people also use prototypes, or ideal models, to identify concepts. A robin, for instance, is a model bird, whereas an ostrich is not. What this tells us is that not all examples of a concept are equally representative. How

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do we know when the line is crossed from tall cup to vase? Probably we mentally compare objects to an "ideal" cup. The upshot is that identifying concepts is difficult when we cannot come up with a prototype relevant to what we see.

Rules of concept formation

Usually people in a society, or those belonging to a particular discipline, are unanimous about the prototypes of a concept e.g. if we have to give a prototype of a vehicle, then we will talk about a ‘car’ and not and escalator’ or ‘elevator’, although these also move and take us from one place to another.

On the other hand, if we are talking about varieties of ‘stairs’, then we can probably take escalators as an example. What will happen if psychologists do not have a common definition of mental illness? How do concepts help in thinking?

We live in a complex world of objects, ideas, and relationships. It is with the help of concepts that we understand this world.Concepts make it possible to communicate ideas, thoughts, and feelings even when the object of interest is not actually present.

Types of Concepts

There are two main types of concepts;

a. Artificial concept

b. Natural concepts

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a. Artificial concept

Concepts that have a unique set of traits and features. These concepts are easy to define and elaborate. e.g. a rectangle has two opposite sides equal, if it is not the case, then it is not a rectangle. But our every day concepts are much more difficult than these concepts. e.g. what is the definition of an animal?

b. Natural concept

Known, familiar and relatively simple concepts that have rather loose features to define and explain them. These concepts are not universal in nature - such as rectangle has two opposite sides equal, if it is not, and then it is not a rectangle. This is not the case in natural concepts. People e.g. defining an animal can vary They in their definition and explanation?

Simple and complex concepts

Some concepts are simple in the sense that they are clearly defined. When a concept is clearly defined, it is easy to distinguish an example from a nonexamplee.g the concept of a square, or an equilateral triangle. But some concepts are rather difficult to define. These are defined in a variety of ways, and marked by a set of complex features. These may be ambiguous, overlapping, and even abstract e.g. a bird, or a chair. Most of the things that

we are in contact with in our everyday life are not as easy to define as a square or a triangle e.g. defining ‘obsessive- compulsive disorder’. These may also involve the subjective experience of the person. And what about the concept of a comfortable chair or an easy or a difficult task? In such situations we need specific, and rather exact examples of a concept i.e., prototypes.

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